Demand for Reduction in Import Duty on Ferro-Nickel

2425. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether the steel manufacturers have asked the Government to reduce import duty on ferro-nickel;

(b) if so, the steps taken to examine and consider the proposal to lower the duty on ferro-nickel; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL & MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) to (c) Representations have been received from some sections of the steel industry seeking reduction in import duty on ferro-nickel. Ministry of Steel makes recommendations to Ministry of Finance on duty matters before formulation of the budget proposals every year. The suggestions/representations received in this regard are duly considered while formulating the recommendations. The recommendations for the year 1997-98 are yet to be finalised by Ministry of Steel.

MNCs in the Mining Sector

2426. SHRI PARAG CHALIHA: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have invited multinational foreign companies to invest in the mining sector in the country;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor alongwith the details of such companies;

(c) the details of the companies which have sent their proposals;

(d) the terms and conditions of the proposed, agreements; and

(e) the time by which these are likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL & MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) and (b) The National Mineral Policy, 1993, envisages, *inter-alia*, private investment both domestic and foreign in the Mineral Sector. Foreign technology and investment is required particularly for the exploration of high value and scarce minerals.

(c) to (e) In the mining and metallurgical sector from January to September, 1996, the Foreign Investment Promotion Board has decided upon 32 proposals of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in which the proposed foreign investment is of the tune of Rs. 668 crores. The Central Government does not maintain a record of applications/proposals made by companies to different State Governments.

Grant of Prospecting Licence (PL) and Mining Lease (ML) is governed by the terms and conditions provided in the Mines & Minerals [Regulation & Development] Act, 1957 and the rules made thereunder.

Criticism of Indian Goods by the Delegates of Uganda Business Community

2427. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a delegation of Uganda's business community on a visit to India has criticized the inferior quality of Indian goods exported to Uganda and has termed Indian traders as cheats (as reported in the Times of India dated 20th November, 1996 — Mumbai edition);

(b) whether they have said that Indian goods particularly machinery, food items and textiles are of poor quality as compared to other countries' goods; and

(c) the steps proposed by the Government to ensure that Indian goods' quality is improved and they are accepted abroad and have good demand?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) The Govt. have noted the news-item nomenclatured 'Indians send worst goods

to Africa', which appeared in 'The Time of India'. While the Confederation of Indian Industry, New Delhi have invited a business delegation from Uganda, no specific complaint from Ugandan importers against Indian exporters for export of sub-standard quality goods has come to the notice.

However, the following steps have been initiated to ensure export of quality goods by Indian exporters to overseas countries:—

— prescription of quality standards for commodities notified under The Export (Quality Control and Inspection) Act, 1963;

— recognition of certain private inspection agencies to suppliment the work of quality certification;

— organisation of seminars and workshops to educate the manufacturers and exporters on the methods of maintaining quality including packaging;

— organisation of exhibitions abroad to show quality goods from the Indian industry;

— provision of assistance by Total Quality Management Division already set up in CII to its members on establishing quality related system in the manufacturing process registered under ISO 9000 series.

Measures to reduce Paper Work for Exporters

2428. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to refer to the news-item appeared in "The Hindustan Times" of 27th November, 1996 captioned "Exporter has still to fill in 40 document" and state:

(a) whether it is a fact that no steps have been taken in the last five months to reduce such paperwork for exporters;

(b) the reasons for ignoring the demands from exporters for less paper work; and

(c) the steps proposed to reduce such needless documentation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) and (b) Simplification and reduction of documentation being a continuous exercise, it undertakes from time to time keeping in view the changing needs consistent with policy liberalisation and modern information technology.

However, export related documentation is crucial to trade operation for both Government and Trade to monitor and control the movement of goods and to safeguard every party's legitimate interests.

(c) Some of the significant steps taken to reduce documentation include standardising documents to computer acceptable formats, increasing computer based operations in the working of various agencies connected with trade so as to facilitate Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and progessive reduction in licensing and other discretionery controls which will also substantially reduce the need for documentation.

Bilateral Trade between India and Russia

2429. SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND: DR. RANBIR SINGH:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of steps are being taken to augment the bilateral trade between India and Russia;

(b) if so, the details thereof with background;

(c) whether these measures will bridge the information gap between the two countries;

(d) whether Government propose to take similar steps to augment the bileteral trade between India and other countries;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?